



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2005

House of Representatives

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS SHOULD NOT BE ON MEDICARE CARDS!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Chairman, everyone in this House and everyone in this country knows that identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes of our decade and creates a nightmare for those who become victims. Identity thieves make off with millions of dollars each day, and each day more than a thousand people are being defrauded. We just saw millions of credit card numbers stolen from the Visa and the MasterCard distribution centers. The Federal Trade Commission has said that identity theft is the top consumer complaint. We all know how credit can be destroyed, earned income can be taken, and a rejection for everything from a college loan to a mortgage can be done. And law enforcement will generally not pursue these identity theft cases.

Part of that peril is, in fact, contributed to by the Federal Government. By including Social Security numbers on Medicare cards, the

Department of Health and Human Services places millions of Medicare beneficiaries at risk of becoming victims of identity theft.

I have a simple amendment, Mr. Chairman. It prohibits the Department of Health and Human Services from including Social Security numbers on Medicare cards. Many commercial health insurance companies and States have already taken such steps. Some States prohibit companies from displaying Social Security numbers internally and assign consumers unique numbers that would appear on Medicare cards. It is time for the Federal Government to catch up and help protect an individual's personal privacy. Even the GAO has published a number of reports and has concluded that there is no reason why the Social Security number cannot be removed from the Medicare card.